introduced for all Extra Departmental Agents (Now called Gramin Dak Sevaks) including EDDA (Extra Departmental Delivery Agent now called Gramin Dak Sevaks Mail Deliver) *vide* Government orders dated 17-12-98. In addition to paid leave, Gramin Dak Sevaks can also avail leave without allowances upto a maximum of 180 days in a year which can further be relaxed in exceptional cases like genuine illness. The Gramin Dak Sevak is required to provide his/her substitute to man the post during leave period, if this arrangement is felt necessary by the leave sanctioning authority. In such cases, substitute is paid minimum of the Time Related Continuity Allowance (TRCA) whereas the regular Gramin Dak Sevak gets his allowance as usual for the period of paid leave.

(d) and (e) The SPOs Nalanda Division Bihar Shariff has not made any change in the existing rules and the instructions of the Department. Therefore, no action against the SPOs, Nalanda Division is called for.

**Telecommunication Network during the Tenth Five Year Plan Period**

3051. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have any plan to expand telecommunication network in the country particularly in rural areas during the Tenth Five Year Plan period;

(b) if so, the details of amount to be spent thereon; and

(c) the steps Government are taking in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) An outlay of Rs. 86984.00 crores including budgetary support of Rs. 1500 crore has been approved by the Planning Commission for the Telecommunications sector for the Tenth Five Year Plan. The estimated amount needed during the Tenth Plan in rural areas is Rs. 8004.00 crores. These estimated amounts are excluding investment to be made by the private sector.

(c) Government PSUs (Public Sector Undertakings) have planned to add 395.23 lakh DELs (Direct Exchange Lines) including 14.67 lakh rural DELs during Tenth Five Year Plan (2002—07) subject to availability of resources.